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ABSTRACT

An outgrowth of the educational reform movement is interest in alternative forms of assessment. One response to the call for increased rigor in measuring learner progress has been the suggestion that assessment should be restructured to resemble real life, with learners taking more responsibility for assessing their own progress. Portfolio assessment is a frequently mentioned form of alternative assessment that encourages development of self-assessment skills. Portfolios of learner work form the basis for this method of assessment. The collection of student work must include student participation in selection of portfolio content, guidelines for selection, criteria for judging merit, and evidence of self-reflection. The following are strengths of portfolio assessment: learners share in the responsibility for assessing their work, data are gathered and evaluated continuously over the course of the learning project, learners have the opportunity to learn about their own learning, and learners develop an expanded view of what is learned. Issues associated with portfolio assessment are as follows: the need for additional resources, development of knowledgeable teachers, and assessment of portfolio information, including establishing standards and criteria and establishing validity and reliability of results. (Annotations of 20 print resources are provided.) (YLB)

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# Portfolio Assessment in Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

## Trends and Issues Alerts

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# TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERTS

## PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN ADULT, CAREER, AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Interest in alternative forms of assessment has emerged as an outgrowth of the educational reform movement. One response to the call for increased rigor in measuring learner progress has been the suggestion that assessment should be restructured to resemble real life, with learners taking more responsibility for assessing their own progress (Valeri-Gold, Olson, and Deming 1991-1992; Wolf 1989). Wolf (ibid.) points out a contradiction between "testing as it takes place in school and reflective self-evaluation that is inseparable from pursuing virtually any kind of worthwhile work" (p. 35). Despite the fact that all students emerge from school "into years of long-term projects . . . [that] require moment-to-moment monitoring, Monday morning quarterbacking and countless judgments of error and worth . . . very little of how assessment is currently structured encourages development of these lifelong skills" (ibid.).

Portfolio assessment is a frequently mentioned form of alternative assessment that encourages the development of self-assessment skills. Portfolios of learner work form the basis for this method of assessment. According to a consortium of Northwest educators (Arter and Spandel 1992) portfolios are "a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in (a) given area(s). This collection must include student participation in selection of portfolio content; the guidelines for selection; the criteria for judging merit; and evidence of student self-refection" (p. 36).

Implemented appropriately, portfolio assessment is a type of assessment that is continuous, collaborative, multidimensional, grounded in knowledge, and authentic (Valencia, McGinley, and Pearson 1990). Frequently mentioned strengths of portfolio assessment include the following: learners share in the responsibility for assessing their work, data are gathered and evaluated continuously over the course of the learning project, learners have an opportunity to learn about their own learning, and learners—and other stakeholders—develop an expanded view of what is learned (Paulson, Paulson, and Meyer 1991; Popp 1992; Wolf 1989).

A number of issues are associated with portfolio assessment. One of the most frequently mentioned is the need for additional resources: portfolio assessment requires more time, money, and effort than standardized tests. Because the use of portfolios assumes a knowledgeable teacher, there are issues related to staff development. Another set of issues has to do with assessing information contained in portfolios, including establishing standards and criteria for use in judging the contents and establishing the validity and reliability of the results. (See Arter and Spandel 1992 and Valencia and Calfee 1991 for discussions of issues and problems associated with portfolio assessment.)

Because it can help achieve many of their instructional goals, adult, career, and vocational educators are interested in portfolio assessment. However, except for use in documenting experiential learning, the literature still contains meager evidence of the use of portfolio assessment within those fields. The annotated bibliography that follows provides information on resources that contain general information on portfolio assessment that can be consulted by adult, career, and vocational educators desiring to learn more about this option.

### Print Resources

Arter, J. A., and Spandel, V. "NCME Instructional Module: Using Portfolios of Student Work in Instruction and Assessment." *Educational Measurement* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 36-44.

Developed to clarify the notion of portfolio assessment and help users design such assessments, this training module presents assessment alternatives and reviews characteristics, pitfalls, and design considerations.

Hebert, E. A. "Portfolios Invite Reflection—from Students and Staff." *Educational Leadership* 49, no. 8 (May 1992): 58-61.

Describes an Illinois elementary school's alternative assessment program that incorporated Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences; includes information about "portfolio evenings," in which learners present their portfolios to their parents.

Lamme, L. L., and Hysmith, C. "One School's Adventure into Portfolio Assessment." *Language Arts* 68, no. 8 (December 1991): 629-640.

Following background information about portfolio assessment, describes the experiences of the faculty in one school with a schoolwide portfolio assessment system.

Morton, J. L. "What Teachers Want to Know about Portfolio Assessment." Unpublished paper. (ED 336 728)

Based on questions asked by teachers in classes, workshops, and conference sessions, this paper provides brief answers to eight of the most frequently asked questions about portfolio assessment.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. *Portfolio Resources.* Portland, OR: Test Center, NWREL, November 1992. (See ED 343 910 for an earlier version of this bibliography.)

This annotated bibliography, updated several times each year, presents articles about portfolio assessment uses collected and reviewed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Test Center.

Olson, M. W. "Portfolios: Education Tools." *Reading Psychology* 12, no. 1 (January-March 1991): 73-80.

Following consideration of the rationale for and some uses of portfolios in an educational context, this column discusses assessment and teacher education uses for portfolios and offers portfolio development guidelines.

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Paulson, F. L.; Paulson, P. R.; and Meyer, C. A. "What Makes a Portfolio a Portfolio?" *Educational Leadership* 48, no. 5 (February 1991): 60-63.

Defines portfolio as an intersection of instruction and assessment and presents guidelines for using portfolios in self-directed learning.

Pierce, L. V., and O'Malley, J. M. *Performance and Portfolio Assessment for Language Minority Students. Program Information Guide Series, 9.* Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1992. (ED 346 747)

A section of this publication reports on portfolio assessment, including designing portfolios, planning for and collecting the data, analyzing contents, using results, and some common concerns.

Popp, R. J. *Family Portfolios: Documenting Change in Parent-Child Relationships*. Louisville, KY: National Center for Family Literacy, February 1992. (ED 342 819)

Provides a description of the introduction of portfolio assessment into family literacy programs and presents a method for overcoming problems and analyzing contents of the portfolios. Specific questions that teachers might have are addressed.

*Portfolio Assessment Clearinghouse*. San Dieguito Union High School District, 710 Encinitas Blvd., Encinitas, CA 92024.

This newsletter containing information about portfolio projects in the Southwest is published several times per year.

*Portfolio News*. Northwest Evaluation Association, P. O. Box 2122, Lake Oswego, OR 97035.

This newsletter, published three times a year, contains information on portfolio projects in the Northwest as well as current updates to NWREL's *Portfolio Resources*.

Stemmer, P.; Brown, B.; and Smith, C. "The Employability Skills Portfolio." *Educational Leadership* 49, no. 6 (March 1992): 32-35.

Reports on Michigan schools pilot of an innovative portfolio approach enabling students to discover, document, and develop employability skills in academics, personnel management, and teamwork.

Valencia, S. W., and Calfee, R. "The Development and Use of Literacy Portfolios for Students, Classes, and Teachers." *Applied Measurement in Education* 4, no. 4 (1991): 333-345.

Suggests that portfolios are a powerful tool for the enhancement of instruction and assessment but only if many important and unresolved issues are confronted.

Valencia, S.; McGinley, W.; and Pearson, P. D. *Assessing Reading and Writing: Building a More Complete Picture for Middle School Assessment. Technical Report No. 500.* Urbana: Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois, June 1990. (ED 320 121)

This report describes portfolio assessment practices in detail and illustrates how they must be applied in a classroom by means of five scenarios.

Valeri-Gold, M.; Olson, J. R.; and Deming, M. P. "Portfolios: Collaborative Authentic Assessment Opportunities for College Developmental Learners." *Journal of Reading* 35, no. 4 (December 1991-January 1992): 298-305.

Advocates the use of portfolios for educational assessment of college developmental learners and discusses recent development of portfolios, factors influencing their use, and portfolios as collaborative reflection.

Vavrus, L. "Put Portfolios to the Test." *Instructor* 100, no. 1 (August 1990): 48-53.

Discusses practical and conceptual aspects of portfolio use and includes an interview with an expert on portfolio-based assessment and state policies on portfolios.

Winter, J. K., and Winter, E. J. "Using the Portfolio Approach in Teaching Intercultural Business Communication." Paper presented at the Annual Eastern Michigan University Conference on Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions, Ypsilanti, Michigan, March 1992. (ED 347 902)

Addresses the many uses of the writing portfolio, particularly in classrooms teaching business communication and the role it can play in the assessment process.

Wolf, D. P. "Portfolio Assessment: Sampling Student Work." *Educational Leadership* 46, no. 7 (April 1989): 35-39.

Describes the relationship between portfolios gathered by artists, musicians, and writers and experiences with students.

Worthen, B. R. "Critical Issues that Will Determine the Future of Alternative Assessment." *Phi Delta Kappan* 74, no. 6 (February 1993): 444-448, 450-456.

A comprehensive overview of issues related to alternative assessment, including 10 conditions that should be present when undertaking alternative assessment efforts.

Yumori, W. C., and Tibbetts, K. A. "Practitioners' Perceptions of the Transition to Portfolio Assessment." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, California, April 1992. (ED 344 194)

Reports the results of a study that examined practitioners' perceptions about the transition from a scope and sequence of skills approach to reading instruction and assessment to a whole literacy curriculum and portfolio assessment.

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